

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

וכי ימנך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו גר ותישב וחי עמך וגו' (כה-לה)

Assisting an impoverished person financially is the next *mitzvah* following *Shemitah* and *Yovel* - *mitzvos* designed to instill *emunah* and an unrelenting belief in *Hashem's* supremacy - and the reason is obvious: Just as a poor person must constantly turn to Heaven in prayer and supplication in order to get by, the one who assists him must also realize that it's not his money that he's giving, but rather the gift that *Hashem* gave him, in order to pass it on to his less fortunate brethren.

A poor man once came to the the home of the **Kotzker Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT"l**, to seek his blessing and help. He had no money to pay for his daughter's wedding or to offer his future son-in-law. Although he worked hard to make ends meet, he had little to show for it, and his dire situation caused him a great deal of stress

When he appeared before the Kotzker, he pleaded his case forcefully and with genuine anguish. "I have nothing to provide my daughter with," he cried, and the usually sharp and serious demeanor of the *Rebbe*, melted away. Immediately, the Kotzker sat down and wrote a long letter of introduction to **R' Moshe Chaim Rothenberg ZT"l** of **Chentshin** (brother of the Chiddushei Harim) urging him to assist the poor man in raising funds for his upcoming wedding. R' Moshe Chaim was a well-to-do man who was known for his kind heart and deep pockets.

"Take this letter," the Kotzker said, when he was finished writing. "Go straight to Chentshin and I have no doubt that R' Moshe Chaim will take care of you."

Infused with hope and the blessing of the Kotzker, he set out immediately for Chentshin. When he finally arrived at the home of R' Moshe Chaim, he was received warmly and held with the highest esteem. After resting for a while, the man presented R' Moshe Chaim with the glowing letter from the Kotzker Rebbe, confident that he would receive all the funds necessary from R' Moshe Chaim. After all, this was a request from the holy Kotzker Rebbe!

After reading the letter carefully, R' Moshe Chaim sat pensively for a few minutes. Then, he stood up, took out a single ruble and handed it to the man. The poor man waited expectantly. Surely, this was not all he was going to get. His travel expenses alone came to more than the amount he had just received. The time spent, the anticipation, the Kotzker's letter ... was it all a waste, a failure? Neither begging nor cajoling availed him. R' Moshe Chaim wouldn't give him any more. Having no choice, he got up and left the house deeply saddened, his hopes shattered.

No sooner had the poor man left his home, than R' Moshe Chaim prepared everything necessary for the wedding, packed it all in his coach. and started out to find the man. He soon found him walking dejectedly along the roadside. R' Moshe Chaim presented him with the packed coach and told him to go happily to his daughter's wedding.

Overwhelmingly perplexed, the poor man faced R' Moshe Chaim. In a tone between excitement and puzzlement, he said, "If you were going to give me all of this anyway, why did you first cause me so much worry and anxiety?"

"Let me explain it to you, my dear friend," answered R' Moshe Chaim. "When you received a letter from the holy *Rebbe* of Kotzk to the wealthy R' Moshe Chaim, in your mind, all your financial problems were solved. You were happy and satisfied. After all, a letter from the Kotzker Rebbe - what can be better than that? But what you forgot at that moment, is that there is a G-d in the world Who provides sustenance to all. You had a letter from the *Rebbe*! You no longer had any worries! You no longer had to daven for your needs. *Hashem* was taken out of the equation."

R' Moshe Chaim spoke gently. "All I wanted was to teach you not to overlook or forget the absolute truth under any circumstances. When you left my home dejected and depressed you again raised your eyes to heaven. You turned back to *Hashem* and implored him. Now, go in peace and celebrate your daughter's wedding with a happy heart."

משל' למה הדבר דומה

אם בחוקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם וגו' (כ-ג)

משל' On R' Chaim Lauer Shlit'a (current *Mashgiach* in Yeshivas Kamenitz) very first day in Lakewood Yeshivah, he attended the *shiur* of **R' Aharon Kotler ZT"l**.

R' Aharon was a genius among geniuses, who spoke as fast as a jet plane, even as his mind worked at a supersonic speed. Only the oldest and most brilliant students were able to follow and understand the *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*.

That day, R' Aharon wove a masterful tapestry to explain a difficult and incomprehensible *sugyah* (topic). When he was finished, he retired to his room and was sitting in his

chair holding his eyeglasses, when young Chaim Lauer entered the room to ask a question on the *shiur*.

R' Aharon greeted him and Chaim proceeded to ask from a Rashi that was in total contradiction to the *Rosh Yeshivah's* entire premise. R' Aharon looked carefully at Rashi's words, and then threw his glasses clear across the room, shouting, "*Bochurel, du hust upgefregt dem gantze shiur!*" (Young man, you have refuted the entire lecture!)

The next day, R' Aharon said a new *shiur* to explain the *sugya*. "This is all due to the *amelus* of this *bochurel*," he

וכי תמכרו ממכר לעמיתך או קנה מד עמיתך אל תנו איש את אחיו וגו' (כה-ד)

The *gemara* (בכורות יג.) learns from here: "When you make a sale to your fellow; to your fellow do not victimize (in business) but to an idol-worshipper you may victimize." Many use these words of *Chazal* to justify unethical and even unlawful business practices with non-Jews. "One is permitted to steal from a non-Jew," is the refrain they say with misplaced self-righteousness. They are careful to be kind and "kosher" to fellow Jews - but have no qualms about "ripping off" non-Jews for their personal gain.

How wrong and misguided they are! **R' Boruch Epstein ZT"l (Torah Temimah)** denotes that "עמיתך" - "your fellow" does not mean Jews - it means any person who is decent and follows the rule of law. Any person - Jew or gentile - who operates in the world of commerce and follows guidelines set up to ensure that people do not rob, steal or cheat from each other - that person is "עמיתך" - and the *Torah* is very explicit in its warning: "*Do not victimize anyone who is 'your fellow.'*"

It is appropriate to quote the words of the **Sefer Chassidim**: "*One may not do an injustice to a gentile, just like a Jew, for such an act of impropriety will bring him down, with no success in his endeavors. And if it doesn't happen to him - it will happen to his children!*"

The **Maharsh'a, R' Shmuel Eidels ZT"l** writes: "*Many people in this generation (?) amass great fortunes through trickery, cheating gentiles, and causing a terrible Chilul Hashem. Then, they use that stolen money for respectable causes; to give themselves honor, to make a grand מ'י שבירך' in shul for self-aggrandizement and glorification! This is nothing less than a מצוה הבאה בעבירה' (benefit of a mitzvah obtained through a sin) and such 'wealth' will have no lasting power.*"

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

בינוני

(פרק אבות ה-ב)

Okay, here's a question for you. The *mishna* describes four different types of people. "What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours; this is the בינוני' (intermediate type of person)." Is this you? Can you relate to this? Probably. At least more than the one who says: "What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine." That's just plain silly! Well, perhaps you feel that: "What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine?" Of course not! That is a real *rasha* - a wicked person. Surely you don't feel that way! Unless you are a saintly, righteous individual who sincerely believes: "*What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours.*" How many people can truly feel that way deep down in the recesses of their hearts?

Well, it is interesting to point out, that option number 1, the seemingly harmless, middle-of-the-road attitude of "בינוני" is called "מדת סדום" - a wicked nature attributed to the citizens of the evil city of Sodom! In fact, one who says: "*What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours*" is anti-*Torah hashkafa*! In Sodom, a person was punished if they broke THEIR rules, the evil rules that governed them. But if you were evil and conformed to Sodom society, you were very well accepted!

The bottom line is this: How do we relate to others? Am I nice to others only when they do what I want? Or do I go along with them even when they don't follow my rules? Am I able to give only on my own terms, or can I give up for others what is precious to me? Let us aim to achieve the level of: "*What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours.*" That wonderfully righteous level - that attribute that *Chazal* call a "*Chasid*" - is one we can reach with *Hashem's* help.

TORAH GEMS

ואם לא תשמעו לו ולא תעשו את כל המצוות האלה. ואם ברוקזתו תמאסו וכו' (כ-ד,טז)

Rashi explains that "listening" to *Hashem* refers to exerting effort and diligence in *Torah* studies. One who lacks *Torah* knowledge he would have gained had he exerted the proper effort becomes ignorant and this prevents him from performing *mitzvos*. He then develops a hatred for those who keep and teach the *mitzvos* of *Hashem* and he then tries to stop others from doing them. After that, he will come to deny that the *mitzvos* were given by *Hashem*, and ultimately, he will deny the Almighty's very existence.

This reaction is difficult to understand. Is one really beginning such a harmful chain of events if his mind wanders during a *Daf Yomi shiur*? Can the high school student who doodles during *shiur* be compared to someone who recognizes *Hashem*, yet rebels against Him?

R' Henach Lebowitz ZT"l writes that the study of *Torah* is the only way in which one can learn how to serve *Hashem*. It is the blueprint for the creation of the world, and the guidebook for our lives. The *Torah* has within its subtleties the knowledge we need to perfect both our *mitzvos* and our *middos*. By not toiling over our *Torah* studies, we are in essence denying the importance of everything a Jew must believe in and become. Therefore, yes, it is conceivable for a Jew to lose his way ר"ל if he loses sight of the *Torah's* guiding light - even for a moment.

We must appreciate the fact that all activities, other than learning *Torah*, are secondary. Our first priority must be studying the *Torah* and with a greater understanding of its true importance, we will realize just how damaging it can be to waste time during the few precious moments we have to study it. We must recognize the obligation we have to streamline our schedule, thereby maximizing the time available to study the *Torah* given to us by *Hashem*.

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

האומר שלי שלי ושלך שלך זו מדה בינונית. ויש אומרים זו מדת סדום